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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [PHUM](#) [ELAB](#) [PINR](#) [PGOV](#) [KPAO](#) [CM](#)
SUBJECT: CAMEROON: UPDATE ON RIOTS, NATIONWIDE TAXI STRIKE,
AND SECURITY SITUATION

REF: A. YAOUNDE 0121

[1](#)B. YAOUNDE 0182

[1](#)1. (U) Embassy Yaounde convened the Emergency Action Committee at 09:45 am local time on February 26 to discuss the security situation throughout the country and to reaffirm the hold-fast travel policy in place for USG employees and other American citizens throughout the country. In attendance were AMB, DCM, RSO, DAO, POL, MGT, CONS, and PA. The EAC reconvened at 3:00 pm.

[1](#)2. (U) The conflicting reports of violence in various parts of the country continued through the night February 25-26. However, the general consensus is that the taxi strike will continue through the day on February 26 and that the general state of unrest and upheaval will continue in the major cities in many parts of Cameroon. A major exception is the far northern provinces, which have large Muslim populations and where the taxi drivers are not on strike. The most severe and widespread violence has been in Douala. After Douala, the most troublesome area is the densely populated West Province, north of the capital; we have numerous reports of unrest and criminal activity in Bafoussam, Foumbat, and other cities. Significant unrest has also been seen in the Anglophone provinces, mainly in the Southwest (Limbe) and Northwest (Bamenda).

[1](#)3. (U) The highway connecting Douala to Yaounde is still blocked by demonstrators. The Douala airport is open, though several airlines have chosen to divert to Yaounde. Airplanes are able to land in Douala, and it is currently safe to travel the short distance from the airport to the major downtown hotels. It is not possible to travel out of the city. The Cameroon government has deployed the Armed Forces to help reestablish order in Douala's streets. According to embassy local staff, the last time the Army was involved in internal stability was in 1992, and this is seen as an alarming step. We are currently assessing the troubling scenario of a widespread loss of governmental control.

[1](#)4. (U) The major grievances from the taxi drivers are the increasing gasoline prices, the increased harassment by the police and the increase in parking fines. The public (other than the opportunistic looters) have expressed their grievances to be the shut down of "Equinox" television and

radio station, the increased price of food staples and cement, unemployment and the Governor of Littoral Province's ban on demonstrations.

15. (U) Transportation problems continue to plague large and small cities in Cameroon. In Yaounde long gas lines were observed and many of the gas stations had closed because they had run out of gas. Gas and food staples are transported mainly on the highway from Douala to Yaounde so we can expect conditions to worsen if the roadblocks continue.

Embassy Actions

16. (U) The Embassy remains open, and the Ambassador continued to discuss the situation with senior officials of the Cameroon government and other chiefs of mission. The Embassy is enforcing a general policy of no inter-city travel throughout Cameroon and has advised American citizens in the Littoral, West, Southwest and Northwest provinces to remain in their residences. Several Embassy employees who were on weekend leave in the West or Southwest provinces when the violence erupted have been instructed to stand fast at their hotels. The Embassy Branch Office in Douala is closed though one local employee was working at the office February 26 and others are working at the airport and downtown locations. The American School in Douala remains closed. The Vice Consul in Douala remains in his residence with the Navy band, USDA TDYers, and several other expatriates. A reception in Limbe planned for February 28, which was to be co-hosted by the Ambassador and the Captain of the USS Ft. McHenry, has

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been canceled.

17. (U) Embassy Yaounde will likely disapprove incoming e-country clearance requests and asks that official travelers defer their trips to Cameroon for the moment. The individual protesting the Cameroon government in front of the Embassy remains in place and informs us he will be joined by some 20 others soon. We have prepared if-asked press guidance on the overall security situation in Cameroon.

18. (U) The consular section has established a control room and is developing a growing list of American citizens who are in Douala or other areas where there has been unrest (currently around 50). Consular personnel are coordinating with wardens and reinforcing guidance that Americans should avoid inter-city travel and not travel in Douala at all. Currently the control room will operate during normal business hours and is reachable by phone at 237-2220-1500 x4033, or by e-mail at YaoundeACS@state.gov. Post will clear and circulate another warden message today. A security announcement will be going out to Americans and embassy local employees instructing them to take caution and to stockpile various food goods and fuel. If the situation deteriorates rapidly we may expect to see stores, gas stations, and pharmacies closed. Already there have been multiple reports of stores and gas stations being looted and burned.

Government Response

19. (U) On February 26, the Ministers of Commerce, Transport, Labor and Communication held a meeting in Yaounde to develop a statement that would clarify the outcome of the meetings with unions and the action that the government would take in the following days. In the meeting, the officials from the "Fund for the Stabilization of Hydrocarbon Prices" (CSPH) briefed transporter unions

about the mechanism for determining whether to increase or decrease gas prices. The union leaders thanked the CSPH for the explanation, but insisted that the government must address their grievances. Later in the day, the Governor of the Littoral Province (Douala), Francis Fai Yengo, issued a statement calling on the population to resume their activities and emphasizing that parents should ensure that their children do not engage in violent activities. In addition, Pascal Mani, the Governor of the West Province, issued a statement warning parents that they should make sure their children do not engage in any demonstrations or violent acts.

¶10. (U) Additional developments will be reported via septel. The POC for this cable is RSO Laura Williams. GARVEY